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TAGS: PREL IZ JO

SUBJECT: JORDAN PRIVATELY WELCOMES THE IIG; PRESS CRITICAL

REF: AMMAN 4427

Classified By: Ambassador Edward Gnehm for reasons 1.5(b), (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Official GOJ reaction to the selection of Ghazi Al Yawer as the President of the Iraq Interim Government (IIG) was positive. King Abdullah issued a statement of support to the Iraqi leadership, and FM Muasher told the press that the GOJ welcomed the appointment of Al Yawer. Press commentary, by contrast, was largely negative, with editorials criticizing the IIG as being U.S. dominated. Private conversations with contacts have been more positive than the press reaction. Most Jordanians want to see stability and prosperity return to Jordan, and we expect are inwardly pleased that Iraqis appear to be taking steps to govern themselves. END SUMMARY.

GOJ WELCOMES IIG; PRESS DOES NOT

¶2. (U) Jordanian government reaction in the press to Al Yawer's selection was positive. King Abdullah sent a congratulatory telegram to Al Yawer, saying that the GOJ was ready to support the efforts of the Iraqi leadership. Meanwhile, FM Marwan Muasher told the press June 2 that the GOJ welcomed the appointment of Al Yawer.

¶3. (U) However, press reports and op-eds were mostly negative. One article quoted U.N. envoy Lakhdar Brahimi as saying that Ambassador Paul Bremer is the dictator of Iraq. One columnist asserted that Brahimi was &sidelined8 in the selections of new Prime Minister Allawi and President Al Yawer, and that it demonstrated that the coalition does not want to transfer nation-building authority in Iraq to the U.N. Another columnist characterized the selection process of Al Yawer as a shameful &auction8 or &bidding event8 to a &great and noble Arab republic" (ref A).

PRIVATE REACTION

¶4. (C) In private, Jordanians have been far more positive. MP and former Speaker Saed Hayel Srour--Sunni tribal leader from the Jordanian side of the Iraqi/Syrian border triangle--told PolCouns June 2 that he was very pleased with the selection of Yawar, a Sunni tribal chief from the dominant Shammar tribe. Despite the harsh press commentary, Srour stressed, most Jordanians want to see stability and prosperity return to Iraq and are inwardly pleased that Iraqis and taking an increasing role in governing themselves. Former MP Nayef Mawla said that he and most of his friends considered the selection process for the IGC legitimate, primarily because "Pachachi, the U.S. candidate, was not elected as President." He noted the favorable reactions of average Iraqis in street interviews on al-Jazeera, al-Arabiya, and BBC television. Ali al-Ayed, the Foreign Minister's Private Office Director, commented to PolCouns and PolOff June 2 that the GOJ was particularly pleased that Ahmad Chalabi and other members of his Iraqi National Congress had been excluded from the IIG (see septel for other comments on the IIG and revised draft Iraq UNSCR). Salwa Nasser of the Jordanian Forum for Business and Professional Women supported the IIG appointments but expressed fear over what she expects will be increased violence over the next month, especially if Al Yawer or other IIG officials are targeted.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) Despite the initial negative press commentary, we sense that most Jordanians view the selection of the IIG, and particularly Yawar as President, as positive because "the U.S. candidate" was not chosen. The more that Iraqis are seen in Jordan as in charge of their own affairs, the more average Jordanians will support the GOJ's policy of assistance in rebuilding Iraq.

¶6. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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GNEHM